



HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE - IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342-1400

13 April 2007

To the families of Soldiers serving in Multi-National Force-Iraq:

On April 11, Secretary of Defense Gates announced that the tour of duty for Soldiers serving in Iraq would be extended from 12 to 15 months. This was tough news, I know, for those on the home front – and also tough, of course, for those on the ground here in Iraq. This was particularly difficult news as a leak of this action meant that the Army was unable to notify you before the extension was reported by the press.

Needless to say, Lieutenant General Odierno and I would not have requested maintenance of the surge force levels in Iraq – the request which led to the tour extensions – if we did not view the additional forces as being critical to the ability of Multi-National Force-Iraq to accomplish its mission. That mission – to help Iraq improve the level of security for its population – is obviously critical to the effort to give Iraq's leaders an opportunity to resolve the difficult political issues that can enable long-term solutions to Iraq's problems.

I want to assure you that I understand – and appreciate deeply – the sacrifices that you and your Soldiers have made and will continue to make in the future. My family and I understand the challenge of long deployments. In fact, this tour of duty in Iraq is my fourth year-or-longer deployment since 2001. We know what you and your loved ones have gone through in recent years, and we – and all Americans – are grateful to you. You, too, have been “soldiering” along with your favorite trooper.

Thank you for your sacrifice, and thank you for your tireless support of your Soldier. You truly are America's unsung heroes.

Sincerely,

*Thanks the each
of you -*

David H. Petraeus
General, United States Army
Commanding